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France and U.S. Aiding Chadians With Information to Rout Libyans

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NDJAMENA, Chad, April 2 — Intelligence information provided by the United States and France is helping the Chadian Army in its successful campaign against Libyan forces in the northern part of the country, according to senior Chadian officials in Ndjamena, the capital.

Intelligence based on satellite pictures of the battlefield and from intercepted Libyan radio messages is reportedly being given to the forces of President Hissen Habré of Chad and is said to have played a role in the series of stunning Chadian victories last week around the Libyans' desert stronghold of Wadi Dum.

Was Strategic Position

The information is also being used to keep track of the Libyans as they retreat into the mountains of northwestern Chad. But the Chadian officials refused to provide any details of the intelligence support, and the American and French authorities in the Chadian capital declined comment.

With the fall of Wadi Dum on March 22, Libya's strategic position in Chad collapsed and with it whatever immediate hopes Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, the Libyan leader, had of dominating northern Chad, according to a French expert on Chad.

"The Libyans thought Wadi Dum was impregnable," said a senior French officer. "But the Chadians captured it in four hours." French officers and both the Chadian and American authorities agreed that the Libyans were then faced with three alternatives: to counterattack and try to retake it, to go on the defensive within the region or to abandon the desert plains of northern Chad and retreat into the Tibesti Mountains to the west.

The defeat at Wadi Dum came as such a shock to the Libyans, according to Chadian officers, that the Libyans decided to retreat even before Chadian forces had completed counting the captured equipment. The Chadians then occupied abandoned Libyan garrisons at Faya-Largeau, Gouro and Ounianga Kebir five days later.

Abandoning Equipment

Chadian forces are pursuing the defeated Libyans, who according to

Chadian communiqués, are continuing to abandon equipment along their way to Zouar in northwestern Chad.

The Government announced today that there was continued fighting between retreating Libyans and Chad.

So far, the Libyans have managed to rescue most of the 14,500 troops they had in northern Chad at the beginning of March, but most of their Soviet-supplied equipment has either been destroyed or captured.

If the Libyans are to remain in Chad, they must hold on in the northwestern corner. They have one remaining major base there, at Aozou in a strip of Chad claimed by Libya. To protect this base, the Libyans must control the Tibesti Mountains, which overlook Aozou, as well as the few roads and trails there. This means that the Libyans may try to stabilize a line of defense anchored on four points — Zouar to the south, where fighting is already taking place, Wour in the east, Yebbi-Bou in the east and Bardai in the central part of the mountains.

In the battle for Fada in December and again at Wadi Dum last month, the Libyans showed themselves no match for the unorthodox desert attacks of the Chadians.

About 1,000 Chadian troops under Mahmet Nouri are fighting the Libyans in the northwestern part of the country. That force will be greatly increased if the 4,000 troops in north central Chad led by Hassane Djamous and Ahmed Gorou, the commanders at Fada and Wadi Dum, continue their pursuit.

Logistics, however, may slow the Chadians. American Embassy officials say the Chadians make great use of firepower in their tactics, and, as a result, they use large quantities of ammunition. Supplies, the Americans say, must be flown from Ndjamena to bases established with French help at Koubaou and Kalait along the 16th parallel, about 125 miles south of Faya-Largeau, and then shipped by truck some 300 miles across the desert.

These officials agree, however, that the Chadians may be able to make use of the ammunition, equipment and sup-

plies captured from the Libyans to keep up the momentum.

Guihiri Korei, an officer in the Chadian Cabinet, said the Libyans had counted on air support to help their ground forces, but that the Chadians had effectively used antiaircraft weapons including American Redeye heat-seeking missiles, to keep the Libyan aircraft so high that their bombing was ineffective.

When asked what alternatives the Libyans had, the Chadian officer said they "could halt their retreat and try to defend themselves, in which case they will be destroyed, or they can try to negotiate themselves out of their deteriorating position and out of Chad."

Either way, he said, Colonel Qaddafi has suffered a strategic defeat that has destroyed both the credibility and effectiveness of the Libyan Army.